REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated November 13, 2008. Claims 1, 3 to 5, 7, 8, 10 and 13 to 19 are pending in the application, with Claims 2 and 12 having been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer of subject matter and without conceding the correctness of the rejection applied against them. Claims 1 and 16 to 18 are the independent claims. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

The Office Action asserts that the phrase "computer-readable medium" in Claims 17 and 18 is being construed as the ROM or storage medium on page 51 of the specification, and is being limited to statutory media. Applicant has inserted the word "storage" into these claims, to emphasize that the claims are directed to statutory subject matter involving computer-readable "storage" media. However, Applicant respectfully submits the claims are not limited to the precise media described only at page 51, but rather should be interpreted to include the computer-readable storage media listed in the specification and any equivalents thereof.

Claims 1 to 5, 7, 8, 10 and 12 to 19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 5,911,139 (Jain) in view of U.S. Publication No. 2002/0106135 (Iwane), U.S. Patent No. 6,961,463 (Loui) and U.S. Publication No. 2002/0176116 (Rhoads).[1] In response, dependent Claims 2 and 12 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer of subject matter and without conceding the correctness of the rejection, and

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[1]/Page 3 of the Office Action omits Claim 14 from the list of rejected claims. However, it is believed that this is merely a typographical error, since Claim 14 is addressed on page 7 of the Office Action.

part of the subject matter of Claims 2 and 12 has been incorporated into the independent claims. Accordingly, this should be viewed as a traversal of the rejection, and its withdrawal is respectfully requested as discussed more fully below.

Independent Claims 1 and 16 to 18 generally concern selectively storing an input image in a database. First search information associated with an input image is acquired on the basis of information input by a user, and feature data contained in the input image is acquired as second search information. If pointer information is detected from the input image indicating a storage location of an original data file, the original data file is searched for using the pointer information. On the other hand, if the pointer information is not detected from the input image, the original data file is searched for using the first and second search information.

According to one aspect of the independent claims herein, the information input by the user and the acquired feature data are registered in an index file, and the index file is used in a next search for the original data file.

By virtue of this arrangement, it is ordinarily possible to improve the speed and performance of the next search for the original data file.

Referring specifically to claim language, independent Claim 1 is directed to an image processing method implemented by a computer for selectively storing an input image in a database. The method includes the steps of (a) acquiring first search information associated with the input image on the basis of information input by a user, (b) acquiring feature data contained in the input image as second search information, and attempting to detect pointer information from the input image indicating a storage location of an original data file in the database, (c) searching for the original data file corresponding

to the input image in the database using the pointer information in a case that the pointer information is detected in step (b), and searching for the original data file using the first and second search information in a case that the pointer information is not detected in step (b), (d) converting the input image into outline data and storing the outline data in the database, in a case where the original data file corresponding to the input image is not found in step (c), wherein the outline data indicates a visual representation of a tracng of the outline of a character or a graphic object, (e) declining to store the input image data into the database, in a case that the original data file corresponding to the input image is found in step (c), and (f) registering the information input by the user in step (a) and the feature data acquired in step (b) in an index file, wherein the index file is used in a next search for the original data file in step (c).

Independent Claims 16, 17 and 18 are directed to a system, a program, and a computer-readable storage medium, respectively, substantially in accordance with the method of Claim 1.

The applied art is not seen to disclose or suggest the features of independent Claims 1 and 16 to 18, and in particular is not seen to disclose or suggest at least the feature of registering information input by a user and feature data acquired from an input image in an index file, wherein the index file is used in a next search for an original data file.

As understood by Applicant, Jain is directed to a system for content-based search and retrieval of visual objects. A visual information retrieval (VIR) engine uses a set of primitives to compare visual objects. A specific set of visual features can be processed and used for content-based similarity scoring. See Jain, Abstract.

Page 6 of the Office Action, in its rejection of now-canceled Claim 2, asserts that Jain (Column 7, lines 27 to 32) discloses registering first search information as an index for searching for the original data file in an index file.

However, the cited portions of Jain simply disclose that visual information features can belong to five abstract data types: values, distributions, indexed values, indexed distributions, and graphs. See Jain, Column 7, lines 27 to 32. More specifically, an "indexed value" data type is a value local to a region of an image or a point in time, while an "indexed distribution" data type is a local pattern. See Jain, Column 7, lines 38 to 47.

Thus, the cited portions of Jain simply define different types of data. The cited portions of Jain are not seen to disclose or suggest storing user input or acquired feature data for a next search, much less registering information input by a user and feature data acquired from an input image in an index file, wherein the index file is used in a next search for an original data file.

Iwane, Loui and Rhoads have been reviewed and are not seen to remedy the deficiencies of Jain.

Therefore, independent Claims 1 and 16 to 18 are believed to be in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested.

The other claims in the application are each dependent from the independent claims and are believed to be allowable over the applied references for at least the same reasons. Because each dependent claim is deemed to define an additional aspect, however, the individual consideration of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

No other matters being raised, the entire application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and such action is courteously solicited.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa, California office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

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